IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claim 24 and amend the claims as follows:

1.   (Currently Amended)   A method of locating an item in a network of vending machines, comprising:

receiving, at a vending machine in the network of vending machines, a purchase order for the item, the vending machine being configured to dispense at least one type of item when stocked with the at least one item;

transmitting, via a network connection established through a network interface of the vending machine, a request for the item; and

receiving, at the vending machine, a response to the request indicative of whether the item is available at at least one other vending machine configured to dispense the item when stocked with the item, whereby a user can retrieve the item at the at least one other vending machine when the item is available at the at least one other vending machine.

2.   (Previously Presented)   The method of claim 1, further comprising outputting to the user, from an output device of the vending machine, an indication of the availability of the item at the at least one other vending machine.

3.   (Currently Amended)   The method of claim 1, wherein the transmitting comprises transmitting the request to the at least one other vending machine.

4.   (Currently Amended)   The method of claim 1, ~~wherein~~ further comprising prior to transmitting, determining, by the vending machine, ~~determines~~ the availability of item at the vending machine, and if the item is not available at the vending machine, then transmitting the request.

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5. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein <u>the</u> receiving the response comprises receiving the response from the at least one other vending machine.

6. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein receiving the response comprises receiving the response from a control system configured to process item requests for a plurality of vending machines of the network of vending machines.

7. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising outputting to an output device a message indicating whether the item was located at the at least one other vending machine and, if so, indicating a location of the at least one other vending machine.

8. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, ~~wherein~~ further comprising if the response is not received within a predetermined period of time, providing an output indicative of the non-availability of the item.

9. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
receiving, at the vending machine, a payment amount for the item; and
receiving, at the vending machine, a refund request for the purchase order.

10. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
receiving, at the vending machine, a payment amount for the item; and
receiving an electronic refund request for the purchase order.

11. (Original) The method of claim 10, further comprising refunding the payment amount.

12. (Original) The method of claim 10, further comprising refunding the payment amount if a corrupted purchase transaction is detected.

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13.   (Original)   The method of claim 10, further comprising refunding the payment amount if customer information received through the network connection satisfies refund conditions.

14.   (Original)   The method of claim 13, wherein the refund conditions comprise a threshold number of purchases made by a requestor of the refund.

15.   (Original)   The method of claim 1, further comprising, if the item is available at the at least one other vending machine, determining whether a price adjustment is necessary for the item.

16.   (Original)   The method of claim 15, wherein determining whether the price adjustment is necessary comprises determining whether a price of the item is at a maximum value.

17.   (Original)   The method of claim 1, wherein transmitting comprises transmitting the request to a control system configured to process item requests for a plurality of vending machines of the network of vending machines.

18.   (Original)   The method of claim 17, further comprising, determining, by the control system, whether any of a plurality of vending machines of the network of vending machines has the item.

19-22. (Canceled)

23.   (Currently Amended)   A signal bearing medium, comprising a program which, when executed by a processor located in a vending machine in the network of vending machines, performs an operation, comprising:

        receiving a purchase order for the item at the vending machine, the vending machine being configured to dispense at least one type of item when stocked with the at least one item;

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transmitting, via a network connection established through a network interface of the vending machine, a request for the item; and

receiving, at the vending machine, a response to the request indicative of whether the item is available at at least one other vending machine configured to dispense the item when stocked with the item, whereby a user can retrieve the item at the <u>at</u> least one other vending machine when the item is available at the at least one other vending machine<u>; and</u>

<u>outputting to the user, from an output device of the vending machine, an indication of the availability of the item at the at least one other vending machine</u>.

24.   (Canceled)

25.   (Original)   The signal bearing medium of claim 23, wherein transmitting comprises transmitting the request to the at least one other vending machine.

26.   (Currently Amended)   The signal bearing medium of claim 23, ~~wherein~~ <u>further comprising,</u> prior to transmitting, <u>determining, by</u> the vending machine<u>,</u> ~~determines~~ the availability of item at the vending machine, and if the item is not available at the vending machine, then transmitting the request.

27.   (Original)   The signal bearing medium of claim 23, wherein receiving the response comprises receiving the response from the at least one other vending machine.

28.   (Original)   The signal bearing medium of claim 23, wherein receiving the response comprises receiving the response from a control system configured to process item requests for a plurality of vending machines of the network of vending machines.

29.   (Original)   The signal bearing medium of claim 23, further comprising outputting to an output device a message indicating whether the item was located at the

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at least one other vending machine and, if so, indicating a location of the at least one other vending machine.

30.   (Currently Amended)   The signal bearing medium of claim 23, ~~wherein~~ <u>further comprising</u> if the response is not received within a predetermined period of time, providing to the user an output indicative of the non-availability of the item.

31.   (Original)   The signal bearing medium of claim 23, further comprising, if the item is available at the at least one other vending machine, determining whether a price adjustment is necessary for the item.

32.   (Original)   The signal bearing medium of claim 31, wherein determining whether the price adjustment is necessary comprises determining whether a price of the item is at a maximum value.

33.   (Original)   The signal bearing medium of claim 23, wherein transmitting comprises transmitting the request to a control system configured to process item requests for a plurality of vending machines of the network of vending machines.

34.   (Original)   The signal bearing medium of claim 33, further comprising, determining, by the control system, whether any of a plurality of vending machines of the network of vending machines has the item.

35-48. (Canceled)

49.   (Previously Presented)   The method of claim 1, wherein the request is transmitted in response to receiving the purchase order.

50.   (Previously Presented)   The signal bearing medium of claim 23, wherein the request is transmitted in response to receiving the purchase order.

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